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# KHAMA

The African Chief

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# AN AFRICAN CHIEF





# AN AFRICAN CHIEF



THE STORY OF  
AN AFRICAN CHIEF

BEING THE LIFE OF KHAMA

BY

MRS. WYNDHAM KNIGHT-BRUCE

*Knight-Bruce, Louise*

WITH A PREFACE BY

EDNA LYALL

*(Jarr)*

S:

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER, & CO. LTD

PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1893

57.195  
45-711

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## P R E F A C E

TO be permitted to write a few words of introduction to the life of such a man as Khama is a great honour, and it was with pleasure we learnt that, at last, the admirable sketch, which appeared a few years ago in the pages of *Murray's Magazine*, was to be republished in a form which could be more easily circulated. For, surely, in these days when column after column in our newspapers is devoted to correspondence on the question—

"Is Christianity played out?" it is time that such a grand living witness to the victory of the Cross as this "Knight of Africa" became better known. He will prove to us that "the world's male chivalry" has not "perished out;" that Christianity is not a failure; and that missions are not mere waste of time and money.

As a rule we candidly admit that missionary literature has no attractions for us, and that to listen to the dry details of Church work among far-away tribes—read perhaps to an assembly of ladies stitching away at unbleached calico "kissaboues"—is a severe trial. But in this sketch of Khama we have the vivid portrayal

of a most noble character, and gain real insight into the difficulties and struggles of a nineteenth century hero who, had he lived in former times, would have been canonised and accorded a place of honour in many a stained-glass window.

We do not give our modern saints any such distinctions, but yet through them the true Light shines, and if, as it has been said, "one hypocrite may make a hundred infidels," it is equally true that one Christ-like man may induce hundreds to follow Christ.

The full significance of such a life as that of Khama, lived in the midst of temptations and troubles, can hardly fail to impress all who carefully study



the details of his career. He seems to us a most convincing argument that Christianity meets the needs of all ages and of all conditions, and his story will wonderfully cheer those who work on but see little result from their labour—those who sow that others may reap.

EDNA LYALL.

EASTBOURNE,

*Easter Eve, 1893.*

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"It is not the many who reform the world : but the few, who rise superior to that public opinion which crucified our Lord many years ago."

—C. KINGSLEY.

"Let it be your method to contemplate spirits apart from the shell they are shut up in."

—MARCUS AURELIUS.

# AN AFRICAN CHIEF

## I.

### *KHAMA'S TRAINING.*

"There was their duty. They were men,  
Schooled the soul's inward Gospel to obey,  
Though leading to the lion's den."

—*Lowell.*

"YOU need not have the waggons  
watched now. We crossed into  
Khama's country last night, and none  
of his people will take anything."

So we were told, standing in a  
drizzling rain, over a veldt fire at  
Selynia in Bechuanaland, on our way  
north to see the African chief Khama,

in his town of Shoshong. The man who spoke was a trooper in the British Border Police, and he knew the country with the practical knowledge learnt from a year's patrol work. Bechuanaland lies just south of Central Africa, reaching from the Zambesi river down to the European Diamond fields at Kimberley. It is one of those little countries, twice as big as herself and more, that England monopolises every now and then, half unconsciously. If we cut it into two halves, the upper one is ruled entirely by Khama, while the lower one must be subdivided, first into an English Protectorate over several smaller chiefs, and then into a Crown colony in the south—both the fruit of Sir Charles Warren's expedition in 1885.

We had been trekking for a fortnight through the Protectorate, with much content in our waggon life, having left behind trains and post-carts. Our red sandy track had gone through grass country that seemed endless, with woods continually, beautiful rocky valleys at times, a stream at intervals, and with thorns and ant heaps (termites) everywhere. Except for a herd-boy in his sheepskin, or a man with a blanket and a pot going to work at the Kimberley mines, there had generally not been a sign of human life from one native village to another.

Selynia was talked of as a famous meeting-place of hunters and wagoners, so that it was rather disappointing to find only a few trees and

a big pond. But though that pond could have been comfortably tucked away into one corner of a Cheshire field, here it made itself valued as the last water on the road for thirty-two miles into Shoshong, and as saving its character by some drinkable mud in the driest of seasons.

Here we saw some of Khama's people for the first time. They came to sell the milk and mafi\* they had brought in quaintly shaped pitchers of white wood, balanced on their heads.

By Khama's wish milk should be given to all travellers, but perhaps

\* Mafi is milk poured into goat skins and hung up for days. One leg of the skin acts as a tap, and is untied once a day to let out the whey; the curds are called mafi, and with mealie porridge are the chief food of the Bechuana.

travellers had been too many, or Selynia was out of sight; at any rate we were asked to pay, but the price was the one settled by the chief. Then, in true African fashion, the men stayed on to stare—an occupation that never palls on the native mind.

Let me explain here—the Bechuana, with their sub-tribes (such as the Bamangwato), are not negroes, who seem to be so much the best known type of African. Their skins are brown, their heads are generally well shaped, and though of course their features vary, the type is good. One boy, for instance, who stood over our fire, had a head like a Roman bust. For the Bechuana are part of the Bantu race, which has peopled almost all South Africa. Where it came



from originally no one knows, but its own tradition is of a descent from the north when the aborigines were driven south or enslaved, and their places taken. Since then it has divided into several nations, such as the Zulu, the Fingo, the Basuto, &c., but all retain the Bantu characteristics of skill in fighting, in cattle owning, and in diplomacy.

Leaving Selynia, thirty-six hours of hard trekking brought us to Shoshong. For the last four miles the grass and bush had been replaced by well-cultivated land and crops of Kaffir corn (millet) and maize, and all the surroundings looked civilised though African. Our poor thirsty oxen reached the outspan ground just as the sun rose over the long range

of hills behind the town. The shadows were beautiful among the rocky heights; and, half hidden in the grey mist, we could hardly realise that the dark brown line at the base of the hills meant masses of huts, and a population of 20,000 natives. But the interest of Shoshong lay in its chief.

We had found Khama in England, in a Parliamentary Blue Book,\* and the matter-of-fact pages were brightened by descriptions that were almost enthusiastic. Lieut. Haynes, R.E., reported: "Khama's authority is well established, and he rules the tribe more by kindness than by severity. He is probably the best example of

\* Further Correspondence respecting the Transvaal and Adjacent Territories, 1886.

what a black man can become by means of a good disposition, and of Christianity." Further on, Lieut. Maund wrote: "Khama's history would fill a volume: suffice it here to say that he is a man far in advance of his people. He rules by generosity instead of by fear. Cool in danger, and thoroughly self-possessed at all times, his very taking manners would win golden opinions in any society."

Nearer home in Africa we found Khama's reputation the same. Sir Sydney Shippard, Administrator of Bechuanaland, Sir F. Carrington, Commandant of the Border Force, travellers, traders, hunters, all spoke of him with respect, and some with friendship. "Of Khama's splendid character," wrote one, "I cannot speak

too highly." Since our Blue Book, too, Khama had had to meet new conditions; loyalty to the great white Queen, straightforwardness and courtesy to her officers, fair dealing with gold companies and prospectors, wise management of the trade route to the north through his country, these had all been asked of him, and had all been given.

"For the interpretation of human life, an anecdote may be more valuable than a theory." There are many theories as to the results of missionary work, and the character of native converts: let us take instead the facts of Khama's life. I hope the quotations given will speak for themselves, and show that these facts rest upon trustworthy evidence from men of experi-

ence and position, and not only on that of missionaries.

The advantages of dates are unknown to natives, but Khama was probably born soon after 1830. He was one of the many sons of the many wives of Sekhome, chief of the Bamangwato, and his heir. As a boy, he twice touched the wider world—he went for a hunting season with Gordon Cumming, of whose courage he still speaks with admiration; and he heard from a wandering Bechuana that strange new customs were being taught in the south by Dr. Moffat. Then a Lutheran missionary reached Shoshong, which was part of the unknown interior in those days; he pleased Sekhome, and was allowed to teach the chief's sons. Khama

readily accepted Christianity, and was baptized while still a boy in his teens. The quiet life, during which Khama remained a pupil of the missionaries, must have lasted for some time. He married, and his wife Mabisa was also a Christian.

But in 1862 a native runner brought in the news that Matabele Impis were out on the foray, and that they were coming to raid Shoshong. Like the descents of Danes on East Anglian farms, these attacks of the Matabele were the terror of the poor Bamangwato. And no wonder, for the Matabele are the great fighting race of those parts, brought up to slaughter, and rejoicing in blood. Neither men, women, nor babies were spared by their assegaies, and indeed to kill

quickly was a mercy they did not always show. So the poor Bechuana hurried their wives and children into caves among the hills, drove their herds into the best concealment they could, and then with little hope brought out their small supply of cheap guns.

Sekhome turned to the supernatural, as we most of us do in trouble, and plunged into incantations with the witch-doctors.

It was certainly a trial between the old and the new faith, but Khama did not hesitate. He knelt in prayer with his fellow-Christians under the bright African moon, urged Sekhome to stop the witchcraft, and asked for leave to start at once to meet the Matabele. Obtaining it, he chose 200 men from his own regiment, and after a long

day's march came upon the Matabele at sunset. His vigorous charge broke two of their companies, but the third stole past in the high grass and attacked him in the rear. Beaten though he was then, the fight had been severe enough to make the Matabele retreat, to prevent the threatened raid, and to win from their brave old warrior-chief Moselikatse the verdict—

“Khama is a man. There is no other man among the Bamangwato.”

“To-day, those who pray to God are our leaders!” shouted the people, as they welcomed Khama back to Shoshong. But when Sekhome turned defence into retaliation, and sent out cattle-lifting parties among the Matabele, Khama protested



strongly, and refused either to go with them, or to share in the booty they brought in. Years afterwards he was asked whether Christianity made his people better soldiers or worse, and he answered: "If I wanted them for a raid, they would be far worse for killing men, women, and children; but if I want them to defend their country, they will fight as well as ever."

After the Matabele affair was over, the celebration of certain heathen rites began, to which every Bechuana father takes his sons. Khama knew that as a Christian he could not go. Sekhome ordered, begged, got angry, and at last said that no son should be his heir who would not attend the "Bogura." When this threat did not move Khama,

Sekhome understood that this new religion was not a mere matter of reading and singing, but of practical life; and his keen worldly wisdom foresaw disaster.

He was right so far; there is a wide gap between a chief who has become a Christian, and his people. He cannot share in things that are the essence of life to them; he loses support by giving up polygamy, he loses power by giving up the help of witchcraft, and he loses popularity by not joining in the orgies of eating and drinking that are called feasts. What caste is to the Hindoo, the customs of his race are to the Bechuana; to change them is to bring down the vengeance of his forefathers. "How can I answer to Khari," (a former chief)

“if I change the customs of the town?” was the answer Sekhome gave when he was spoken to of Christianity. So he set to work to baffle the “White Christ,” and, as he thought, to preserve his people: marriage seemed to him to be a key-note, and he ordered Khama, already married to Mabisa, to take another wife. Khama indignantly refused; and certainly no woman has ever had a more loyal knight than Mabisa found in her husband. The struggle to force another wife upon him went on for ten years, but Khama’s answer never varied: “I refuse on account of the Word of God. Lay the hardest tasks on me as to hunting elephants for ivory, or any service you can think of as a token of my obedience, but I cannot

take another wife." Sekhomo tried plots and treachery, Khama met them with quiet endurance; Christians and heathen alike say that he was never once heard even to blame his father. One can understand why a German traveller, who was at Shoshong at the time, wrote: "I am glad, by my acquaintance with Khama, to have the opportunity of mentioning a black man whom I would, under no circumstances, be ashamed to call my friend. The simple, modest, and at the same time noble deportment of this chief's son, awoke a delightful feeling."\*

Life is thought little of in heathen countries, and killing is the easiest way out of difficulties. So what little

\* "Drei Yähre in Süd Afrika." Von Gustav Fritsch. Breslau, 1868.

patience Sekhome had soon wore out, and one night he called a few of his men together, and took them to Khama's hut, where he ordered them to kill his son as he slept. The men refused, and disarmed Sekhome when he tried to carry out his own instructions. Before morning the whole town had heard of the attempt, and rose as one man in favour of Khama. It was the more striking, as the killing of a chief's nearest relations was then quite a common affair. Before Khama could control the people, Sekhome had fled in terror, for he knew the usual fate of deposed chiefs, though he did not know the Gesta Christi. With much trouble Khama found out his hiding-place, and sent messengers to beg him to return and to take his old

position. Sekhome believed it all to be a plot, and returned timidly—to be met by Khama with every mark of respect, and to be replaced in the chieftainship. Then Khama asked that the marriage question might be left as it was—a promise that Sekhome made and broke with equal readiness.

His next attempt succeeded better, for he brought in the supernatural powers of which the poor Bechuana live in terror. Khama woke one night to find his court lit up with flames, and to see the witch-doctors dancing round his hut in the red light, as they threw spells and shouted curses. It was a weird sight, and one wonders if the old belief and dread of evil spirits started up in Khama's mind; but

whether by an effort or not, he walked up to the men and stamped out their mystic fire. The matter could not end as easily. "Khama has been bewitched," said the Bechuana with awe, and the only remedy would be to enlist any remaining and disengaged evil spirits on his own side. They sent a deputation begging Khama to do this at once. "If you do not," the spokesmen added, "the people cannot remain with you. We do not fear Sekhome, but who can resist the power of the 'baloi'?"

It was a kindly effort, and to put it away must have cost the pain so often part of a brave life, when the easy compliance that would keep both friends and popularity is impossible to a true nature. Khama could only

answer: "The Word of God forbids me to curse any one, least of all my own father." Sadly enough, perhaps, the men went away to give their report, and the people decided to change sides. "We preferred the son," they said, "and we gave him his chance. He might have been our chief to-day, but for his being in the Word of God, which makes him so impracticable."

Left alone, Khama with his family and a few faithful followers, had to take refuge on the hills from fresh attempts upon his life. Sekhome tried to cut off all food supplies, and to poison their one spring; for eight days he succeeded in leaving them entirely without water, when the little party could only live by creeping down at night to the gardens outside



the town, and carrying back a few melons for food and drink. Once two of the men brought back a horse that belonged to Sekhome, thinking themselves very clever to have caught it. But Khama was indignant—had he not told them they were not to attack his father in any way? they must take back the horse at once, with a message of regret from him.

After a time Sekhome, whose plots read like a page of old Italian history, consented to a reconciliation, but only because he had sent for Macheng, a rival claimant to the chieftainship, and offered to resign in his favour if he would only kill Khama. With a light heart and every intention of fulfilling this condition Macheng came to Shoshong, but he presently changed his

mind. "The people of the Word of God alone speak the truth," he said; "if you want your son killed, kill him yourself."

Except for Khama's protection this speech would have cost Macheng his life; as it was he retaliated, headed the people in a revolt, and drove Sekhome away. The old man knew he had no soldier among his tribes equal to Khama, so he sent for him, put him in command, and told him to win back Shoshong. There was a good deal of hard fighting, but in the end Khama was successful, and re-installed Sekhome.

He was still hopeless of peace for himself, and decided to go northwards, and to make a new home near the Zonga river. It proved to be a fever-

stricken place, but the bulk of the Bamangwato men followed him there. Sekhome was gradually left with little to rule over except the subject tribes, and furious at the men's desertion he made prisoners of their wives. Roused at last by this wrong to others, Khama flashed down at the head of his own regiment, recovered the women, and partly burnt Shoshong. Then he marched back to his unhealthy settlement, refusing to remain as chief while his father lived.

News of Sekhome's death however quickly followed, but the troubles were not over, for a younger son, Khamanie, had been instigated by his father before his death to hold Shoshong, and take the chieftainship.

Through this rebellion too, ran the

same golden threads of courage and gentleness, of fights won and of lives spared. It ended in victory to Khama, and Khamanie took refuge in the Transvaal, from which safe shelter he has continued to do all the harm he could. "Khamanie has been for many years engaged in plots having for their object the death of Khama, and the establishment of himself as chief. On one occasion Khama spared his brother's life without apparently securing exemption from further treasonable attempts by him." \*

At one time Khamanie declared that he would shoot Khama. The latter heard of it, and decided to meet his brother at once, knowing how quickly

\* Bechuanaland. Blue Book, 1888.

serious trouble might arise with friendly help from the Boers. The headmen in council urged that a regiment should go with him. "No," said Khama, "that might make trouble with the Boers. If my brother desires to kill me, I had better go alone." Alone he went, and so influenced Khamanie that there was peace for a time.

"Khama's treatment of his rebellious brother has been chivalric in the extreme," reported Lieut. Haynes, R.E., and it is not hard to agree with him.

## II.

### *KHAMA'S CHIEFTAINSHIP.*

"The way to mend the bad world is to create the right world."—*Emerson.*

SETTLED at last in Shoshong, Khama was clear as to what kind of chief he meant to be. His mind was not troubled either with a conviction that the more degraded of his people knew better than himself, or that he must be content to do right alone, leaving his subjects entire liberty to do wrong. Religion to Khama is not a matter only between a man and his God, but essentially a thing between a man and his

neighbour; and the earthly kingdom is to be ruled by the Heavenly Laws.

"You English," said an Indian general, "imagine that liberty means the same thing everywhere. You make a great mistake. Liberty with you means the right to govern yourselves; liberty to an Asiatic means the right to be governed." This is the liberty that Khama, with an equal knowledge of African character, has given to his people. "What the chiefs do, the people will do," he said to Bishop Knight Bruce, and on this belief he acts, with the decision taught by his own hard training.

I cannot tell the whole story of Khama's chieftainship, but I have been able to collect some of the best known

facts, and they may be taken as an honest sample of the whole.

A list of more unpopular measures than those with which Khama began his reign it would be hard to find. They were necessities to him as a Christian, but only a great soul could have faced their difficulty. Other chiefs have renounced Christianity themselves, while encouraging it in their people ; one or two have resigned their chieftainship. Human nature seems to be tempted either to acquiesce in an Alexandria, or to leave it for personal holiness in the desert ; but there are nobler souls who cleanse their Alexandria, and Khama joined that gallant company.

One of his first proclamations entirely forbade witchcraft, and banished



the witch-doctors. This to a Bechuana was an inconceivable order, his only faith being in evil spirits, and in their power to hurt him. It was they who sent the droughts, the storms, the insects that destroyed his crops, the lung disease and the horse sickness that killed his cattle, his own headache, or his child's death. Worse still, it was they who possessed his neighbour to use him as a tool for mischief. "God, He want kill us all," was their first thought when told of a Greater Spirit with surpassing power. Certainly life to a poor Bechuana did not consist in correspondence with his environment, but in perpetual escape from it. The witch-doctors alone had charms against evil, and could detect or "smell out" the person who had "overlooked" them:

this unlucky mortal was then treated with horrible cruelty or killed. As the witch-doctors were under the chief's control, this "smelling out" system got rid of any rich or troublesome offender, and the chief became his heir, with perhaps a death tax to the doctor. What it led to we can understand by the story of a Matabele princess, for whom some one was "smelt out" and killed, as having bewitched her, every time that she had neuralgia.

Khama's next decree stopped other customs that were every-day affairs to a Bechuana: the killing of children born weakly or deformed, burying the living baby with its dead mother, destroying one of twin children, leaving the useless old people to starve, and the right of a man to kill his wife

in any petty quarrel ; also the horrible punishments then in use, such as the cutting off of noses, ears, or hands, and the burning out of eyes. Death, he said, would be inflicted only for murder, and he has very rarely allowed it. He then brought in the system of trial by jury, and the meanest subject may not be punished unless the evidence thoroughly convicts him. Truly we forget, as we criticise Christian natives to-day, the horrible evils from which they have been brought out by the pioneers of missionary work.

Living among the Bamangwato were slave races of Bushmen, the Masarwa. These poor creatures could be killed at pleasure by their masters, and lived in miserable starvation, as they were forbidden to keep herds of their own.

This, too, Khama changed; the Masarwa are now encouraged to keep goats and sheep, and their lives are protected. A man who knew the country well wrote: "Khama is quick to punish any of their masters—his own people—whom he finds guilty of cruelty towards them." \*

But done in the teeth of his people as these and other reforms were, they still stand second to Khama's unwavering determination to put down drink. The history is not one that we can lightly read.

Almost as soon as he had settled at Shoshong he called the people to meet him in the great Kothla, as he wished to speak about their native beer. This beer was a thick liquor

\* F. Johnson.—*Cape Argus*, August 24, 1888.

made from fermented corn, and was very stupefying. When harvests were good, and Kaffir corn was plentiful, all work was given up, the women made beer in huge quantities, each village in turn summoned its neighbours, and day after day was spent in heavy drinking. Temperance legislation had no knots for Khama. He told the people that they were utterly degraded by these beer-drinkings, and that in future he entirely forbade them either to make or drink it. Needless to say, the meeting broke up in bitter discontent; other new ways were unpopular enough, but this was unbearable. They remembered Khamanie across the border, ready to head any discontent; some talked openly of bringing him back.

Undoubtedly Khama's position was in jeopardy for a long time. "I withstood my people at the risk of my life," he said afterwards, and it was no exaggeration.

"Any one," wrote Mr. Bent, "who knows the love of the Kaffir for his porridge-like beer, and his occasional orgies, will understand what a power one man must have to stop this in a whole tribe. Even the missionaries have remonstrated with him, representing the measure as too strong, but Khama replies: "Beer is the source of all quarrels and disputes, I will stop it." \*

Years of steady insistence and patient watchfulness made the law

\* The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland. Theodore Bent, F.S.A., F.R.G.S.

at last effective. When we were at Shoshong the perfect order and quietness of the crowded town, with its 20,000 natives, were a striking contrast to scenes one remembered in other places, where either the canteen vote was valuable, or the chiefs were heathen. "It would require no police," says our Blue Book, "to manage the native part of the town. By his determination and courage Khama has put down strong drink, and prevented traders bringing it into his country."

"*Prevented Traders*," this was Khama's next labour, and perhaps one of his most difficult. Hardly had the meeting of grumbling natives dispersed to mourn their beer, than he summoned another of all the white men in the place, and of representa-

tives of his own people. What took place is described by one of the traders present, a man whose admiration for Khama is great, and whose own commerce naturally has been stainless.

“Khama informed us that he would not permit us to continue introducing liquor into the town, and selling it to his people. Seeing we had been accustomed to the use of it ourselves, he would permit it to us. Any breach of this law he would visit by banishment from his town. He then turned to his tribe, and warned them that this law was not only for the whites, but for them, and if they were detected buying liquor from the traders he should deprive them of their cattle, and banish them also



from the town. The meeting then broke up. The following year, I think, another meeting was called by the chief. He informed us that he found we were bringing in liquor in as large quantities as ever. He regretted having to speak a second time, and having granted us permission to bring in liquor for our own consumption, he must now prohibit it."\*

"My people are not allowed to buy brandy," was Khama's simple explanation, "because my people will be destroyed if they are allowed to buy brandy."

But in spite of meetings and of warnings one store continued to be,

\* Blue Book. Affairs of Bechuanaland. 1890.  
Evidence of W. A. Musson.

as Khama described it, "a place where drink was." At last he turned both the partners to whom it belonged, and who brought in brandy under cover of blankets, out of his country. But even then, to quote our Blue Book again, "Khama gave the men very lenient and considerate treatment, including an extension of eighteen months in which to wind up their affairs. He even went so far as to pay out of his own pocket many outstanding debts due to the firm from some of his poorer subjects." \*

The men, Francis and Clarke, left at last, but only to visit the Transvaal and Matabeleland in order to make trouble for Khama. Afterwards

\* Blue Book. Report by Sir Sydney Shippard, K.C.M.G., Administrator of Bechuanaland.

they went back to Shoshong, inspired by a certain class of colonial opinion that said, "Never be beaten by a nigger." Finding that the return had not been authorised by the English authorities, Khama arrested the men, and sent them down country to be dealt with by their own government. The natives were excited at the insult, so Khama chose their escort from older men, for fear the younger soldiers might not act courteously; and Francis and Clarke took advantage of this to make their escape.

"Khama acted throughout," wrote another trader in Shoshong to me, "with great dignity, self-control, and prudence. At the hands of any other chief the men would have met with very different treatment."

Unfortunately the matter did not end. Francis and Clarke joined forces with a Boer—Grobler, declared they had a permit from the Matabele chief to look for gold on land claimed by Khama, and again crossed the border. Part of a Bamangwato regiment was in charge of the district, but unluckily its head was a young and excitable native. He had Khama's orders to forbid the party to go on, which he obeyed ; but when his men were seized, deprived of their guns, and some beaten, he lost his head, and got the guns back by treachery. There was a little shooting ; Grobler was wounded by a stray shot, and afterwards died. The affair had to end in arbitration between the Transvaal Government and our own ; and it was decided that Khama

should give compensation for the Dutch loss. The court held by the Administrator to investigate must have been a picturesque affair, close to the Limpopo, under the shade of the great trees on its banks.

Parts of Sir Sydney Shippard's report are interesting. He wrote:—  
“I may here remark that I accept Khama's evidence as strictly true. He is a man of tried courage and proved integrity, strictly just according to his lights, and firm without being cruel. His character entitles him to the respect and affection with which he is plainly regarded by his people, and to the esteem entertained for him by all unprejudiced Europeans who have come in contact with him.

“The native witnesses had to give

their evidence before him, and such is the dread inspired by the severity with which he would punish perjury, that it is improbable they would risk it. . . . It is difficult to speak of the conduct of Messrs. Francis and Clarke in terms sufficiently measured."

As to the actual fighting the Administrator reported, "Khama himself is wholly free from blame in the matter." The regiment was tried by the chief at Shoshong for cowardice and disobedience to orders; those who had taken part in the encounter, including Khama's own brother, were convicted, and sentenced to hard labour for a term of six years. A year ago the sentence was still in force. Every morning the men met at an early hour in the Kothla, armed with spades,

and then went out to dig up new land for agriculture. It was certainly a most productive penal sentence. Mr. Theodore Bent, in describing it, says, "There is something Teutonic in Khama's imperial discipline, but the Bechuana are made of different stuff to the Germans, and their respect for a chief like Khama, who has actually repulsed the foe, and established peace, prosperity, and justice in all his borders, is unbounded, and his word is law." \* Khama's own letter on the matter is extremely touching. He addressed the Administrator—

"Your Honour will permit me to point out that it is not the same thing to offer my country to Her Majesty to

\* Ruined Cities of Mashonaland. Theo. Bent, F.S.A., F.R.G.S., &c.

be occupied by English settlers—Her Majesty's subjects governed by Her Majesty's ministers—and to allow men so worthless and unscrupulous as Messrs. Wood, Francis, and Chapman to come outside of all governments, and flood my country with their drink, after all the long struggle I have made against it, withstanding my people at the risk of my life, and just when they have themselves come to see how great a salvation my drink laws have proved to be. It were better for me that I should lose my country than that it should be flooded with drink. . . . I fear Lobengula (the Matabele chief) less than I fear brandy. I fought Lobengula and drove him back, and he never came again, and God who helped me then would help me again.



Lobengula never gives me a sleepless night. But to fight against drink is to fight against demons, and not against men. I dread the white man's drink more than the assegaies of the Matabele, which kill men's bodies, and is quickly over; but drink puts devils into men, and destroys both their souls and their bodies for ever. *Its* wounds never heal. I pray your honour never to ask me to open even a little door to the drink; and Francis desires that, and has always desired it. That has been my constant battle with his firm."

A letter this that makes one wish England would read her own Blue Books, and teach her children what manner of work is theirs to do in the world they help to govern.

As the years went on, and every-

where the white man came a little further, Khama shrewdly saw that his country was like its own crest and totem—a duyker, with the hounds within reach. There was the hungry Transvaal on the one side, the Matabele, the Germans, and the Colony on the others.

With that strange trust so general among native races, Khama chose England as his ally and protector. I think nothing is more striking in South Africa than the absolute faith of the natives in the Great White Queen, if she will but rule them direct. It fills one, as the trust of a child does, with a wish to respond rightly to their faith. "We love the government of the Queen," they say, "but we do not love the government of the Cape."

Khama conducted the negotiations with dignity; this is part of the letter he wrote in drawing up the treaty:—

“I give thanks for the words of the Queen, and I give to the Queen to make laws and to change them in the country of the Bamangwato. Nevertheless I am not baffled in the government of my own town, or in deciding cases among my own people according to custom. There are certain laws of my country which the Queen of England finds in operation which are advantageous to my people, and I wish that these laws should not be taken away. I refer to our law concerning intoxicating drinks, that they should not enter the country of the Bamangwato whether among black people or white people. I refer

further to our law which declares that the lands of the Bamangwato are not saleable. I say, let this law be upheld among black people and white people.

“My people enjoy three things in our country—their cultivated lands, their cattle stations, and their hunting grounds. We have lived through these three things. Certainly the game will come to an end in the future, but while it is still there, I hold that it ought to be hunted by my people.

“I know that the help and protection of the Queen requires money, and I agree that that money should be paid by the country protected. I have thought how this can be done ; I mean plans which can be thought out at the beginning, so that the Queen’s people

may all be pleased—the black people and the white people. I propose that a certain country of known dimensions should be mine and my people's, for our cultivated fields and our cattle stations. Then I say with reference to all the country that remains, I wish that the English people should come and live in it, that they should turn it into their cultivated fields and cattle stations. But my people must not be prevented from hunting in all the country, except where the English shall have come to dwell. I am of opinion that the country which I shall give over will exceed in value the cost of the Protectorate among the Bamangwato. But I feel that I am speaking to gentlemen of the Government of England. Shall I be afraid that they

will requite me with witchcraft? (*i.e.*, deception). . . . Further, I shall be ready, along with my people, to go out all of us to fight for the country alongside the English; to stop them who attack, or to go after them on the spoor. . . . Having done this, without doubt if there came a great difficulty, we would appeal for the help of our Queen in England. The right kind of English settler will be seen by his doings on his place."

One finds little notices of the way in which Khama carries out this arrangement scattered up and down in the Government reports. Sir Sydney Shippard writes: "For a prosperous journey so far I am much indebted to the care and attention of Khama's people, who have removed obstacles,

pointed out the best waters, offered all that the country produces, and proved their desire to do what they know will be most pleasing to their generous and noble-minded chief." And other reports are: "The chief Khama has given us great assistance by sending natives to fill up vacancies." "I have great satisfaction in reporting the cordial assistance rendered to me by the chief Khama," while recently we have all heard of his ready offer of help in men and horses, when the Matabele raids in Mashonaland became threatening.

In what one might call Foreign affairs there has been the same straightforward dealing, conciliatory but decided, and a policy ruled by the Sermon on the Mount.

At one time a small refugee people in his country, the Saleika, became troublesome, and Khama received responsible advice to suppress the discontent at once, as the Saleika were trying to get help from the Transvaal. He reluctantly agreed, and marched against them with a large force, accompanied by a few men of the Border Police, one of whom gave me the account. The Saleika stronghold was on a high rock standing alone in the centre of a circle of hills. The Bamangwato attacked with a rush, but the moment they had taken the place, Khama stopped the fighting, and allowed the Saleika to escape unpursued. Messengers were sent after them with promises of safety, and with an offer of waggons for their women



and children to take them over the border to the Transvaal, where they had intended to settle, if defeated. However, tradition was too strong for faith, and the Saleika remained in hiding, until by twos and threes they slipped away to their new settlement.

In his complicated relations with the Matabele, Khama has acted courteously but firmly, until mutual respect has taken the place of the old raids and slaughter.


Like its neighbours, Bechuanaland possesses the doubtful advantages of gold reefs, and Khama was plied with requests from gold prospectors. From among them he chose one company, to whom he gave the sole mining rights in his country, in return for a definite payment. Since then he has been offered

larger sums to break faith and transfer the concession. But "fins cuer ne peut menter," Khama not only kept his word to the accepted company to the letter, but in the spirit on some points that the first agreement had not specified. The Manager himself told me this, and added, "I call the chief a practical Christian. He has learnt his Christianity, and he acts up to it."

It is only another instance of the same scrupulous honour that, when lately he sold a horse for a high price and it died a few days afterwards, he returned the money, saying that the illness must have been acquired before the sale took place.

Would not this man have been admitted with joy at Camelford into the Brotherhood of Arthur? For he has

translated into modern Christian duty all that was meant by the lovely vision of an Aslauga, or of Mystic Light and the Holy Grail. True, the picture may not be so pretty ; the mean figures of the canteen-keeper, the brandy-smuggler, and the witch-doctor must take the place of the "foe in shining armour ;" the weak-willed subject struggling against the champion is the object instead of an exquisite mysticism ; Mabisa in her cotton gown replaces a golden-haired princess ; and the lookers-on are not a brilliant court or the knights of a Round Table, but a few scattered missionaries, or a passing traveller.



### III.

#### *KHAMA AND HIS PEOPLE.*

“ Earth's crammed with Heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God ;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,—  
The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries.”

—*E. B. Browning.*

AND now to tell what little I can of  
Khama's daily life, and of his people.

The day begins with sunrise, when  
the chief goes to his Kothla, a scrupulously clean courtyard, of large extent,  
enclosed with low walls. This place  
is the Westminster Hall of the nation.  
Here every one goes who has a complaint, a petition, or a dispute; outlying natives bring in the news—of

a kind that would have engrossed quiet English villages in coaching days—an ox has died mysteriously, a traveller's waggon has broken down, an unknown white man has been met with, some Boer waggons are too near the frontier, and so on; among these people nothing can happen that is not at once known. Here, too, come the headmen to report what is going on in the section of country or of people under their charge; and mingled with these at times come traders, hunters, and gold prospectors, English officers who have ridden up with despatches, or a missionary who gains hope from Khama's life for his lonely work. Khama greets all alike with easy, natural dignity, and rather silent manner.

"Your words are wise words," he often answers when he agrees with what has been said; when he does not, he replies with equal clearness and brevity. "Hunters who want to hunt in my country are not allowed to pass through it without my permission," or "I shall not join in a war of which I know nothing, or which is unjust." \*

The rest of the day Khama spends among his people, generally on horseback—horses are his human point, and even an Englishman might envy his stud. He visits the traders' stores, the outlying villages, and the fields where the people are at work, taking the greatest interest in their crops and their cattle-rearing, and trying to im-

\* Blue Book. Bechuanaland. 1891.

prove their methods in both with all the zeal of a country squire.

“Men don’t work there,” said a little Bechuana boy describing his home, “women work, and men dress their hair and fight and talk.” But a native who will not touch the womanly hoe, recognises that to drive two oxen in a plough is fit work for his noble self, and Khama, by pressing on the use of ploughs, has succeeded in his purpose of lessening the hard work done by the women. Year after year the digging season is begun with a solemn meeting for public prayer, instead of the old charms, and the people notice that since these Rogation Days began the harvests have largely increased.

He has regulated Bamangwato com-

merce much in the spirit of the Tudor statutes, forbidding barter, in which he shrewdly saw his people were helplessly cheated by any unscrupulous trader, and fixing prices. Fifteen shillings was to be paid for a sheep, ten for a goat, a guinea for making up a kaross, and so on. His people never seemed to ask more than the fixed price, and would never take less. "Not only," says Mr. Bent, "has Khama established his own reputation for honesty, he is supposed to have inoculated all his people with the same virtue."

Both he and Mabisa have been tenderly careful of the daughters of the Christian converts, helping them in many ways to fill their new position with self-respect, and teaching them



what it ought to be ; for indeed, poor girls, they have neither heredity nor example to guide them.

Sunday at Shoshong was very home-like—it had that beautiful stillness when the world grows more silent,—

“To hear the angels sing.”

Waggon's were not actually forbidden to trek in, for the sandy roads often mean unexpected delays, but Khama made his strong dislike to it thoroughly known. He himself always went up early to the springs in the mountain kloof, where the women gathered in hundreds, each with her red or yellow calabash or water-pot to take back the day's supply. Khama gave them his kindly greeting and a few friendly words as they passed, “Good morning, my friend,” or “my child.”

Both morning and afternoon he was present at the services, and the other Christians knew well that they were more than expected to be equally regular. We saw the large congregation coming back from one service, when Khama with his kindly manner walked up the road among his people, patting the curly heads of the little brown children as they went dancing along, or greeting the men as "my son."

Later that day the men of a very old regiment were gathered together in his court to receive food, for, as Lieut. Haynes reported, "Khama spends a great part of his revenue in acts of kindness to his people." \*

We found him a very courteous host during our short stay, and, unlike other

\* Blue Book. Bechuanaland. 1888.

native chiefs, he resents presents being offered by those whom he has allowed to pass through his country, or to hunt in it. In person he is a tall, slight man, upright and active in spite of his more than sixty years; his thin nervous face is full of intelligence and of decision, and he has a charming smile when pleased. He dresses in plain grey suits, and does not add the peacock feather or the pink ribbon that a native loves to put on his dull European garments. His home is among his people, and, except that his huts are larger, there is little difference between them. For Khama does not believe in silly imitations of the white man, but tries to develop himself and his people on their own lines—and if he succeeds he will have done a work

for all Africa, and not only for the Bechuana. His manner is quiet and dignified, and I can only describe his whole personality as winning.

Indeed we walked quite sadly up the narrow winding road to say good-bye to him and to Mabisa, our last evening at Shoshong. The sun was setting as we sat with them in their spotlessly clean court, the lights and shadows falling through the loopholed mud walls round. The whole scene stays with one as a picture not to be forgotten: the large brown hut, its walls stencilled, the broad eaves covering the raised step that made a shaded verandah; the fire outside, with three little brown maidens, half cooking, half playing; the graceful figures of girls carrying corn who crossed the court at

intervals ; Khama's son, a bright, nice boy, sitting with Mabisa under the caves ; the daughters beside her ; the little grandchildren at play ; and among them all the man who had won, through suffering and danger, the purity of that almost unique home among African chiefs.

Since then, Shoshong itself has passed away, and only a few ruins are left of all its crowded life. The springs in the kloof dried up more and more, and after the English alliance it was less necessary to cling to the mountains as a fortress in Matabele raids, so that in 1889 Khama and his council decided on a move. They chose a site sixty miles to the north-west, with a lovely range of rocky wooded hills, ample water supply, and

fertile soil. Here an allotment of ground was marked out for each man and his family ; the big central square and the wide avenues were carefully planned, and the best position of all was set apart for church and missionaries. Then, with hardly a warning, Khama gave the order to move. The well-to-do were instructed to lend waggons, oxen, and horses, every one was to help his neighbour, and the big population obediently set out. With its order and disorder, its children, its stuff, and its herds, it must have been a curious picture of a more famous exodus.

On reaching Palapwé, the new capital, each man began to build on his appointed ground, till in less than a year there were streets of huts and

their enclosures, shaded by trees and in regular order, that covered twenty square miles, and contained a population numbering about 30,000. In each of the ten great divisions of the town Khama built a large airy schoolroom, where the children learn reading and writing, and, in the blessed absence of conscience clauses, receive regular Bible teaching from native schoolmasters who have been trained by the missionaries. Then there are stores for the European traders, blacksmiths' shops for waggon mending, and a little galvanised iron house, that holds the telegraph office—a quaint link with our English nineteenth century.

The church has not yet been built, but the people have raised a sum of £3000 for it in some day to come.

Meanwhile the congregation gathers on the hill-side, often in numbers of nearly 2000, to join in their simple worship, and to be addressed by their missionary, Mr. Hepburne, or at times by Khama himself. The chief gives sound practical addresses, we were told, in which he speaks plainly of the weaknesses that mar the national life, and tells his people in straightest fashion what men and women Christ would have them be.

To his own children Khama has been a loving careful father, and has devoted himself especially to bringing up his only son and heir Sekhome. Poor Sekhome, he will need a wise head and a strong hand to carry himself and his people well through the time to come. Let us hope he may remain an



independent chief under British protection, given for once as wisely in Africa as in India.

"A Christian and a hero," was the description of Khama given by a soldier whose words carry weight in England and in Africa. "It is not what people say of him," said a trooper in the Border Police, "it is what I know myself. I was quartered in Shoshong for eighteen months, and I call him a genuine Christian man. He does not make much fuss over it, but it is real."

So I must leave Khama's life. I have hoped to show how it is borne witness to by men with little sympathy for missionary work, as well as by those with much. It stands as the life of a man who is recognised to have

been true to every obligation ; to have borne without flinching years of persecution and danger ; to have ruled his people for their good, regardless of his own popularity ; to have been fearless and forgiving to his enemies ; to have been in a rare degree loyal to his Christ and to his neighbour.

Is he, as he has been called, "an unaccountable outcrop of mental power and integrity?"

Yes, perfectly unaccountable if you leave out his Christianity. But if not, then Khama's life does but show the power of the Indwelling Christ, Who is the Life alike of Roman and Teuton, of Greek and Bantu.

**Ballantyne Press**

*Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.  
Edinburgh and London*



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